

Frequently Asked Questions Home Business Ordinance

The following questions and answers provide some basic information about the requirements of the new ordinance. Click [here](#) to view the home business ordinance. Click [here](#) to view the developer's handout relating to home business permits.

1. What is a home business? A home business is a business that is run in conjunction with the residential use of a piece of property. There has to be a permanent residence on the property. The residents operating the home business do not have to own the residence, but do have to own the business conducted from the residence.
2. Where are home businesses allowed? Home businesses are allowed in all zoning districts in the county except for the following:
 - community commercial (C-3);
 - limited commercial (CL);
 - highway commercial (CH);
 - business park (BP);
 - university (U);
 - airport (A); and
 - industrial (ML and MH).
3. Do I need a home business permit? Yes, unless a home business meets the standards for an exempt business.
4. What qualifies as an exempt home business? Exempt home businesses in urban areas are those that:
 - have no heavy equipment;
 - have no outside storage;
 - have no customers that come to the residence;
 - do not involve an accessory structure (like a separate shop or a detached garage); and
 - have two or fewer non-resident employees.

The same is true for exempt businesses in rural areas, except that up to 400 square feet of an accessory structure may be used.

5. What if my home business existed on June 15, 2004, the date the ordinance was adopted? Existing home businesses started on or before June 15, 2004 are treated differently than home businesses started after that date. There are 'grandfathered' home businesses and 'transition' home businesses.
6. What is a 'grandfathered' home business? A 'grandfathered' home business is a business that was established on or before January 1, 2001 and that has been in continuous operation since that time. Grandfathered home businesses need a Type I home business permit to continue to operate, unless they would otherwise be exempt (see

#4 above). The home business must have the permit by June 15, 2005, and has until June 15, 2006 to comply with any conditions of the permit. Depending on the business type and location, there may be landscaping and screening requirements and a requirement to address the use of the private road (see #11 below). With a permit, the grandfathered home business may continue to operate at the size it was on June 15, 2004, but may not expand.

7. What is a 'transition' home business? A 'transition' home business is a business that was established between January 1, 2001 and June 15, 2004, and that has been in continuous operation since it was established. Transition home businesses need a Type I home business permit to operate, unless they would otherwise be exempt (see #4 above). Unlike grandfathered home businesses, transition home businesses have until June 15, 2005 to meet the standards in the home business ordinance. Depending on the business type and location, there may be landscaping and screening requirements and a requirement to address the use of the private road (see #11 below).

8. What is a new home business? A new home business is one that is established after June 15, 2004. All new home businesses need a home business permit, unless they are otherwise exempt (see #4 above). Permits are reviewed using either a Type I process (for a minor home business) or a Type II process (for a major home business). The standards for a home business depend on whether the property is urban (within an urban growth area) or rural (outside of an urban growth area).

9. How do I prove when my home business was established? All businesses, including home businesses need a state business license which would have an issuance date. Acceptable evidence could also include proof of compliance with applicable state registration or taxing regulations.

10. When would I have to landscape and screen my home business activities? For existing businesses, landscaping and screening is required if there is outdoor storage of equipment, vehicles or materials. For new businesses, the landscaping and screening requirement is only for major rural home businesses. The area that has to be landscaped and/or screened is the business activity area, an area in which all outside business-related activities must be contained. This includes outside storage, and parking for vehicles, equipment, employees and customers.

11. Does it make a difference if my home business is on a private road? Yes. For any existing home business and for any new minor home business that is on a private road, an application will be handled using a Type II process, unless evidence is submitted at the time of application that addresses any safety and maintenance impacts related to the home business. If this evidence is provided, the application will be processed using a Type I process.

12. Do I need building permits for buildings used for a home business? Yes. All structures used for the home business are required to be legally permitted.

13. What if my home business is agriculture-related? An accessory structure in connection with an agriculture operation does not need a building permit. However, the structure can only be used for agricultural activities, not for a home business.

14. Are there any limitations on advertising my home business? One sign of up to two square feet is allowed. A separate sign permit is not needed if the sign is included in the home business application.

15. How do I apply for a home business permit? Click [here](#) to view the developer's handout relating to home business permits. The county will begin accepting applications for home businesses on September 1, 2004 at the Customer Service Division on the first floor of the Public Service Center, 1300 Franklin, in Vancouver.

16. What are the fees associated with a home business permit? The Board adopted the following fees for home businesses on July 6, 2004. Before that date, the Type I fee had been \$84 and the Type II fee had been \$2761.

Section	Activity	Fee
N	Home Business	
I	Minor Urban and Rural Type I Review, and those with private road access/neighborhood agreement	\$90
II	Minor Urban and Rural Type II Review with private road access/no neighborhood agreement	\$1,292
III	Plus: Minor Home Business/Type I Review if application received after code enforcement action has been initiated	\$90
IV	Major Urban Type II Review without private road access	\$564
V	Major Urban Type II Review with private road access	\$1,292
VI	Major Rural Type II Review (Base fee):	\$564
a	Plus: private road access	\$892
b	Plus: activity area screening	\$392
	Plus: Minor Home Business/Type II Review if application received after code enforcement action has been initiated	\$564